



ANIMAL ADVISORY BOARD (AAB)

Pre-Meeting Committee Minutes for July 29, 2013

Present: Barbara Hays, Debbie Donour, Debra Griggs, Rob Blizard, Marie Jensen, Jean Linman, Dorothy Winn, Staff David Freeman, Jamie O'Grady, Jake Roos, Rose Armour, Citizens- Rachel Bellis, Kathy Galvin, Doug Beckman.

I. WELCOME

- Jean asked for approval of the minutes from the last meeting. Debra suggested amendments, which were accepted. The amendments are shown in the **attached minutes**.

Jean asked that the group focus tonight on program suggestions to increase the Animal Care Center's (ACC) 2013 – 2014 save rate. The following topics were suggested & discussed at the previous meeting: spay and neuter (s/n) for low-income individuals; City funded s/n; follow-up after adoption; software that communicates between ACC and Animal Control (AC); additional resources to assist individuals on how to keep animals in their homes; microchipping; marketing/outreach; working with real estate groups and landlords to accept animals; working with NRHA to get more animals s/n.

II. DISCUSSION

- **High Volume Adoptions** (with media outreach), Can we reach out to the civic leagues to communicate with their members about animals picked up by AC within their area?

Debra asked Barbara where they held offsite adoptions. ACC has offsite adoption events at Petco Janaf and Virginia Beach Petco. Petco Janaf has had a hard time keeping volunteers because of low adoption rates. The in-store adoptions in Virginia Beach are located in an odd spot in the store and Barbara is working with the manager to address the issue.

A number of possible partners and/or collaborators were suggested such as: church fairs; working with other shelters; Care-a-Lot, with NSPCA; and Muddy Paws

Dorothy offered a list of additional sites/groups to collaborate with: Tidewater Striders; J&A Racing; Running, etc.; ODU football games; ODU basketball games; Harbor Park; Larchmont PTA, namely the Rat Race and Carnival. Anything with the schools is great.

Jean added: Opera in the Park; Festevents events; and First Friday.

Barbara said they participate in the ODU volunteer fair. Some of the events are cost prohibitive and is a budgetary barrier

Jean asked if the City would charge the ACC to participate in a City organized event.

Barbara said they are at Petco 12-days a month with cats. The ACC has also done events at Freemason Apartments and Water's Edge Apartments. Historically Priority collaborative adoption event with all the shelters has been the most successful event with over 100 animals adopted.

Barbara said that the challenge with doing more adoption events is not enough volunteers.

- **Media Outreach** Can the City put a link to post lost cats and dogs on the City's Home Page? Is it possible to link that into civic leagues? **ACTION ITEM:** Barbara will work with her IT contacts (in her work group) to see if this was possible.

ACC had 112 active Volunteers in June of 2013

Is it possible to do a weekly segment on the TV or radio?

- **Rescue and Transfers** Rob mentioned that he had heard that there was criticism at last week's meeting of the SPCA. SPCA is working hard to change and had an audit completed in April. He mentioned that he would like to collaborate with ACC, but does not feel like there is collaboration at this time.

Outreach to senior apartments was suggested, to assist the foster program. Someone could talk to owners to see if they would waive the pet deposit fee, if it were just for foster animals.

ACTION ITEM: Debbie will develop a list of senior apartments.

Is it possible to put something on the front page of the City website and/or into Compass to promote and recruit fosters?

Barbara said that to expand the foster program, there would be a need for continual training and recruiting, which would require additional staffing. In addition, the greatest need for fosters is underage kittens and it is very important to grow your foster program in conjunction with your adoptions, otherwise you have a number of kittens available for adoption that will not get adopted.

Jamie manages fosters and spends ~2 hours a day on answering questions, setting up needed vaccinations, check-ups, foster logistics and emergency calls.

Suggested resources to recruit fosters: churches; ODU; NSU; VA Wesleyan. There needs to be a targeted media campaign regarding shelter foster needs. – Barbara reiterated that such a concentrated effort would require additional staffing to manage fosters and organize the outreach.

Debra talked about the idea of blasting pictures of animals that were imminently going to be euthanized and how in another location this had reunited a woman with her lost animal.

Barbara discussed that the goal is to find a permanent home for an animal, not just move them around, which is a stress on the animal. Unfortunately rescue groups are not always all that they seem, ACC has to be careful not to push fosters beyond their capacity or comfort level and to be sure that animals are transferred to reputable groups.

Debra stated there is a value decision – the whole premise of saving lives, if it is the difference between death and a rescue it is an easy option. It is an opportunity to step up. Focus on pictures and visuals; it is valuable to redouble efforts.

Marie said in New York, they have a “2 days left” campaign – blasting pictures of animals that will be euthanized in two days that has had impact.

Barbara respectfully disagreed, Marin County in California blasted about animals that were going to be euthanized, it ingrained in people that they were going to see sadness at the shelter and she (Barbara) has worked very hard to remove that notion of sadness and threats regarding adoptions. She has made it fun and educational; the shelter needs positive foot traffic.

Debra felt that the public needs to know that the animals are going to be euthanized.

RECOMMENDATION: Put a link on the front page of the City’s website for an Adoptable Animal of the Day. The Committee agreed that there should be a media outreach program to increase foster programs and get the public involved in the shelter.

RECOMMENDATION: Put monthly reports from ACC on the ACC document center. The Committee agreed that shelter transparency should be increased and that the public has a right to know the numbers (intake and disposition) at our shelter.

- **S/N (owned or free roaming)** Jean handed out the ***attached worksheet***, as a follow up to the previous meeting’s decision to recommend to Council that the City participate in s/n funding for low income, from Sarah Crawford that calculated the number of s/n needed to significantly impact shelter intake of cats and dogs in Norfolk.

Based upon research and assistance from Peter Marsh, 3400 animals, from those with low income, need to be s/n each year for 7 years to significantly impact shelter intake. Cost estimate was \$100/animal. Subsidized costs could be lower due to vets and clinics assistance as well as pet owners’ contribution.

At this estimated rate it could cost \$340,000/annually and \$2.38million over the 7 years The City’s participation in a s/n program, at any level, to assist those with great financial need would over time impact the intake numbers at our shelter.

Barbara requested that the group share any s/n activities especially for low-income residents, so ACC can post them to their calendar.

Debra feels that if this is done collectively there is a real opportunity for grant money.

The zip code information on where the animals are picked up by AC will assist this effort to promote outreach for s/n to those neighborhoods.

Jean asked what dollar amount would the City entertain to support s/n.

David Freeman suggested that when approaching the City for the request for funds to s/n Norfolk animals to look at what number would make a difference. There are limited opportunities in the FY2014 budget and that it might be more realistic to try to be a part of the FY2015 budget enhancement process, which could take several months.

Jean presented a rough calculation that there are 40,000 feral cats or community cats in Norfolk. There is a lot of work to do with the community cats.

Debbie stated that Trap Neuter and Return (TNR) works well and can do a lot.

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee agreed that the City should have a policy in support of TNR.

- **Adoption Follow-up** Any adoption follow-up would need to be done with volunteers, as there is not sufficient staff to manage the follow-up.

Barbara and Jake further explained that the ACC has suggested personnel enhancements an assistant volunteer coordinator to assist Laurelyn, the current volunteer coordinator. The ACC has also requested three additional animal caretakers. The approval of the additional staffing is pending.

- **Shelter Surrender Intervention** Jean suggested that perhaps the shelter could have a pilot program to address this. Debra handed out copies of the Project Safety Net program at Richmond SPCA. Marie discussed the Friends of NACC new owner surrender intervention initiative. It was discussed and agreed by the Committee that the City website should link to the Friends' program.
- Jean asked if it would be possible to have a recording or a help desk that someone can answer questions for those that might need assisting and are seeking to surrender their animals?

Barbara stated that it takes a lot of time and expertise, to staff such a help desk. It can take an hour to get a comprehensive animal assessment, it is very labor intensive.

Jean asked if it would be possible to have a help desk address non-behavior issues; or a hot line with only a recording.

Barbara responded that doing that would be a problem logically because ACC only has three lines, which are already quite busy.

Debra asked if there were more hours to surrender animals than to adopt them.

Barbara answered yes they do not restrict surrender hours. She outlined the adoption hours. Thursday – Sunday are the busiest days and there are no adoption hours on Monday. If ACC were fully staffed they would be able to add more adoption hours.

Marie suggested a link to ASPCA Friends site with tips for behavior management, they have numerous FAQs, and it is a very robust site. ACC could put the link on their website.

The group discussed other outreach venues with the military: Military Ombudsman; the Recreation, Morale and Welfare Affairs Office; City's Veteran's Affair Liaison Captain John Andrews.

RECOMMENDATION: The AC officers should have a cell phone that allows callers to talk to them directly and follow-up on previous calls.

- **Comments from non-committee members**

Doug Beckmann asked the possibility of a mobile adoption van – Barbara discussed the progress of a grant that she is working on with the Petco Foundation for a mobile van. She is working to get City approval to submit the grant, once the proposal period opens.

Jake Roos – Explained that with the hypothetical staff increases (an additional volunteer coordinator assistant and 3 additional animal caretakers) would allow ACC to increase their adoption hours from 32

hours to 41 hours/week. This would include three additional evening adoption hours, which would also accommodate the volunteers, as more volunteers are available in the evening.

Debra asked if a possible future project could be to look at the Norfolk's Animal Code, which is grossly out of step with the state code.

Barbara mentioned that quite a bit of work has been done when they were under the Department of Planning. **ACTION ITEM:** Barbara will find the unapproved changes and send it to Jean.

Meeting ended at 7:50pm. The next Board meeting will be August 7, 2013 at 5:30pm.